



Calhoun: The NPS Institutional Archive

History of NPS

Centennial Celebration, 2009-2010

2009-05

Steve Lamont (interview)

Naval Postgraduate School

<http://hdl.handle.net/10945/45670>



Calhoun is a project of the Dudley Knox Library at NPS, furthering the precepts and goals of open government and government transparency. All information contained herein has been approved for release by the NPS Public Affairs Officer.

Dudley Knox Library / Naval Postgraduate School
411 Dyer Road / 1 University Circle
Monterey, California USA 93943

<http://www.nps.edu/library>

Steve Lamont

I think the most interesting thing I did at NPS was probably working on Waterloo SCRIPT on the 3800. I learned a lot about software architecture -- they did some pretty interesting things, as I recall.

Yeah, I worked on the Waterloo SCRIPT software quite a bit -- got it working with the SHERPA gadget [an early very high quality printer, that printed on rolls of silver paper -- IBM's research lab said the name stood for "San 'H'osay Electronic Raster Printer Attachment"] and then the big IBM printer -- I think the nomenclature was a 3800 "printing subsystem". The thing was *huge* -- filled up most of the old printer room. I'm sure that was still running when I left. [It lived on until 2007!] I think there was some move to switch over to the IBM product, SCRIPT/VS, but I don't know if/when that happened -- it was probably after I left.

I remember pulling a lot of all nighters (or at least coming home at 3 or 4 AM) and guzzling a lot of coffee at Denny's while poring over 160,000 lines of Assembler code, trying to figure out how to get the 3800 working with SCRIPT.

Do you remember when the PC lab was set up?

I was in the process of setting things up when I got the offer to come down to SDSC [San Diego Supercomputer Center] in 1985.

Did you do more of the setting up, or was it more Kathy Strutynski?

I don't think I can take any credit. I did some initial experimentation with local area networking but didn't have time to actually complete a production system before I left. I think you can accurately credit Ms. Strutynski with the PC lab. She arrived after I left and probably spent a while cleaning up my mess.

I had a rather ambitious design in mind involving virtual disk storage which was probably both beyond the limits of the technology and my abilities to implement at the time. I remember talking with someone at SDSC one day and having an "Aha!" moment about what kept my design from working (I believe it involved MS-DOS system level function calls not being recursively reentrant).

Did the lab start with Xerox workstations? Was there an early stage with both Xeroxes and PCs, and a later stage with PCs only?

I'm sure the PCs were first. We ordered a small clutch of them -- perhaps five. I believe that they were plain old PCs, no hard disk and a single 5.25 inch floppy. There was some sort of external disk subsystem but I'm not sure what it was. I doubt that it had much more than 5 MB of storage but that's really just a guess.

NPS was really a learning experience for me -- I managed to talk Doug Williams into sending me to SIGGRAPH, which exposed me to a whole new world of graphics and eventually visualization, which lead me to what I'm doing today, sort of.

The bureaucracy largely left me alone and I returned the favor. I just sort of worked on things that seemed interesting at the time and had a lot of freedom. Why Doug Williams and Roger Hilleary tolerated me, I'll never know.